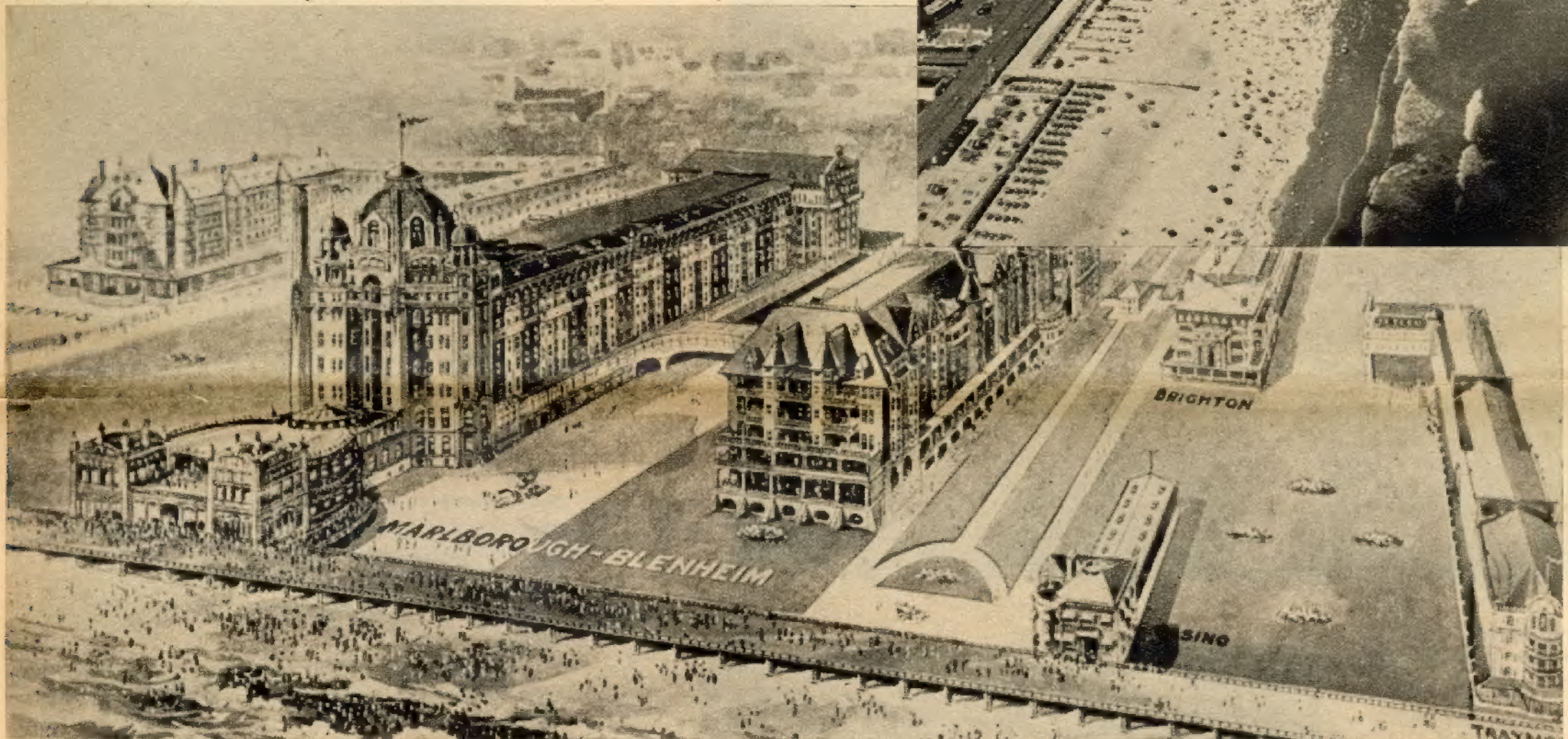


The New Jersey Shore...

HOSTS of the HOLIDAY INNS

*Hotel Men Have Had Major Role in
Transforming Beach Areas of State
From Barrens Into Fabulous Playground*



Center of Atlantic City's hotel section "then" and "now." Most of modern structures bear names of older counterparts shown in early 20th century drawing. Brighton was first "all-year" hotel.

By JOHN T. CUNNINGHAM

OCCASIONALLY, when the heat and humidity of July or August turn city apartments into so many Hades-on-Earth, there comes a time when scarcely a room of any kind is to be found available from Highlands to Cape May.

Gasping humans trot from boardwalk hotel to one-block-back inn and from two-blocks-back boarding house to three-blocks-back tourist home. They wave good crisp folding money, rapidly shift their standards downward from ocean view with bath to attic room with army cot. Then the disappointed ones go home or, if stubborn, sleep in their cars or under the boardwalk.

One weekend later, chilling rain sweeps the Atlantic coast, and rooms—ocean view as well as attic—go begging. Ah, to be a hotel man, gathering

ulcers within sight of the beautiful sea.

Presumably there are compensations, not the least of which could be a bank balance, weather and changing public desires permitting. There might be a modicum of cheer also in the knowledge that hotel men played a major role in transforming the New Jersey shore from a barrens into a fabulous playground—although that type of cheer warms few lobbies on a cold and wet Saturday night in August.

TODAY the seaside hotel is nowhere near the institution it was a half century ago. Everything in those days

revolved around the hotel—sleep, meals, entertainment, romance, social distinction, gossip, fashions—everything the guests believed worthwhile in life.

When guests unpacked their Saratoga trunks back in what hotel men understandably regard as "the good old days," they came for more than dinner. Fifty years ago a stay at a seashore hotel averaged three weeks; today a three-day stay is more the rule.

The automobile has been the difference. Most shore visitors now throw bathing suits on the back seat, hop down for their day in the waves and hop right back to Philadelphia or New-

ark at night. That might be fine for the Parkway toll booths, the amusement stands and the hot dog vendors, but it makes mine host wonder whether keeping up his multimillion-dollar, multistory inn is worthwhile.

Not that the grand hotels overlooking the restless surf are things of the past. Those which have survived obsolescence, bankruptcy and fire—more or less in that order—are as impressive as ever. Possibly they are more impressive than ever, considering that hotel building by the sea has stood still since the late 1920s. Hotels of 30 or more years ago have certain appeals for all that—such things, for example, as space and charm.

ON the horizon is a day when the motel, the hotel's informal little brother, will be king (or at least a strong pretender for the crown) of

This is the 11th of a series of articles on the New Jersey Shore. Next week's installment will consider the changes wrought by passing years on everything from bathing suits to boardwalk fun.

the overnight guest set. Nonetheless, the major hotels will remain—and, in fact, those which meet the competition will be highly significant.

Understanding resort hotels is complicated by the fact that no one knows for sure how many hotels are clustered along the New Jersey shore. The big rub is this: What is a hotel—10 rooms, 20 rooms, 100 rooms? The yardstick is highly elastic and often stretches to include some "hotels" which seem on sight to be mighty poor relations of the Waldorf-Astoria, if indeed they are related at all.

Using a reasonably discerning standard of measurement, there probably aren't more than 75 to 100 major hotels between Sandy Hook and Cape May. Nevertheless, establishments included on lists from town to town would total upward from 1,500 to 2,500 "hotels."

Difficulty in classifying hotels of distinction is an old story. Gustav Kobbe, who in 1889 compiled the delightful "New Jersey Coast and Pines," said he applied a "rigid test" to hotels. He found only 25 hotels worthy of the accolade "first class"—no matter what hotel advertising and other literature said.

"If any reader disagrees with the author in his rating of any hotel," wrote Mr. Kobbe, "he will confer a favor on the author by notifying him thereof." It can be imagined that Mr. Kobbe's mail ran heavy; no one is quite as sensitive as a hotel man, with his sensitivity usually increasing as his hotel's quality declines.

THE state's coast hotels in Mr. Kobbe's day were well into the half century of greatest New Jersey Shore hotel prominence—those 50 years between 1880 and 1930.

During that period old hotels gave way to newer models, often after devastating fire leveled old fire traps. That half century brought fireproofing and elevators, private baths and year-around programs. That period also swept Atlantic City into unparalleled eminence as a resort city.

Hotel men made Atlantic City. As the "Queen of Resorts" celebrated its 50th anniversary in 1904, the bonifaces boasted correctly that "in the amount of money invested, the number of people employed and the volume of business transacted, Atlantic City is pre-eminently a hotel town."

Atlantic City led every resort in the world in the number and splendor of its hotels in 1904—and, for that matter, did not lose that leadership until Miami Beach pushed its skyline ever upward and outward after World War II.

ALREADY the first elements of the long-familiar ocean-view hotels loomed beside the Boardwalk in 1904. That golden anniversary year the Chalfonte Hotel stretched out to its full 10 stories, its management proudly proclaiming the structure to be Atlantic City's first fireproof hotel.

Not the first brick hotel, mind you, the first fireproof hotel. Atlantic City's first brick hotel (the New York) arose in 1892, and seven years later in 1899 the Waldorf-Astoria and the

Bleak House became the first Boardwalk brick hotels. Brick hotels would have come eventually, but pause a moment to reflect how an unheralded worker, one Herbert McCann, accelerated their arrival.

Herbert, the story goes, left a water hose running on the Atlantic City beach in 1883 while he wandered elsewhere for a brief period. The nozzle burrowed deep into the sand and when Herbert returned, he pressed a piece of lumber down beside the nozzle and noted how easily he could drive it downward with the help of the gushing hose.

No idle pastime, that. Herbert McCann's discovery became the forerunner of hydraulic pile driving. Down into Atlantic City's sands went the pilings, their way eased by water pressure. Atop those deeply driven piles heavy brick hotels took shape.

THE piles, the soaring public demands, the promotion, the improved service—on these Atlantic City's hotels reached new heights. Such still-famed names as the Traymore, Chalfonte-Haddon Hall, the Shelburne, the Dennis, the St. Charles, the Brighton, the Seaside and others knew considerable glory by 1900.

Meanwhile, up and down the New Jersey coast, hotel keepers served a select clientele with a dignity and aplomb inherited in many instances from their fathers and their fathers before them. The hotel keepers knew their guests and their guests knew them; those days no resort hotel man ran his establishment from an office in New York or San Francisco.

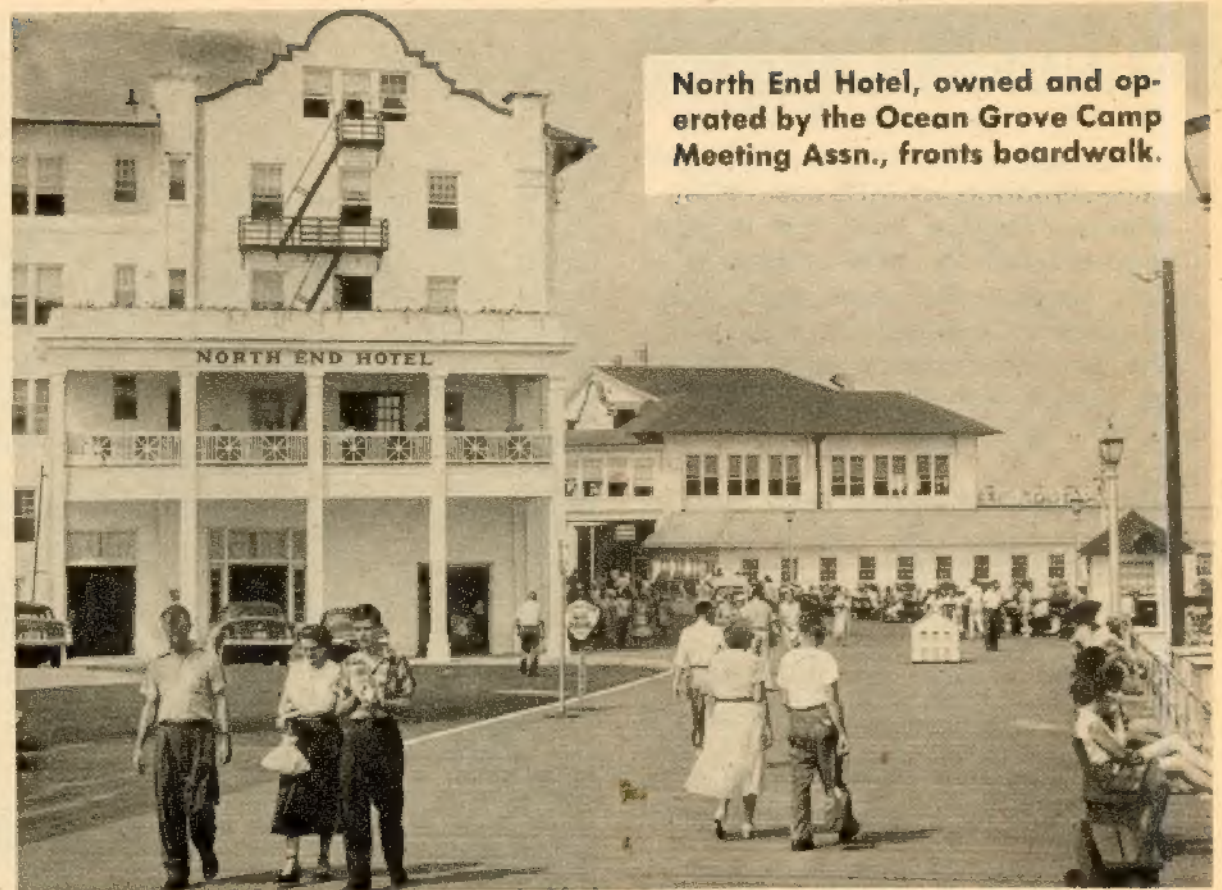
Hotel keepers looked askance at anyone who even dared suggest an alternative to the American Plan (room and all meals, for the benefit of those who've come in lately). Guests just naturally wanted meals, not to mention quarters for their maids and valets and coachmen and stables for their horses and donkeys. Nothing casual about a visit in those days, you see.

GREAT hotels attracted wealthy and/or famous people—at Sea Bright, at Long Branch, at Asbury Park, at Spring Lake, at Sea Girt, at Beach Haven, at Atlantic City, at Ocean City, at Cape May. Secretly, many a hotel man wondered how Cape May's old hotel traditions managed to linger on after all the years.

Secretly, many a hotel man still wonders. Cape May's pre-1900 atmosphere still pervades this oldest of resorts—a happenstance which some find tremendously pleasing and which others find annoyingly archaic. Only the Admiral Hotel, built in 1908 as the largest hotel south of Atlantic City, and a few motels have a 20th century air. Cape May's hotels are old, and that's that.

Hotels out of the past retain in Cape May a veneration seldom found elsewhere, with only Ocean Grove's well-kept establishments offering any rivalry at all. Exhibit "A" at the cape, beyond question, is Congress Hall with a history dating back to 1816

(Continued on Following Page)



North End Hotel, owned and operated by the Ocean Grove Camp Meeting Assn., fronts boardwalk.



Monmouth Hotel, one of Spring Lake's establishments, has retained many past traditions.



The Berkeley-Carteret in Asbury Park is North Shore's only major year-around hotel.

SHORE HOTELS

(Continued From Preceding Page)

(and including fires which destroyed earlier buildings in 1818 and 1878).

Thomas Hughes built the original Congress Hall in 1816—although it didn't acquire the name until 1828. The present Congress Hall dates from 1879, its 14-inch brick walls and its high pillars giving it a substantial—but old—appearance.

THE second Congress Hall had its admirers. One such saw it in 1853 and enthused thusly:

"What else can it be but grand? At night, when this hall is cleared of its tables and chairs, and hundreds of gas jets are brilliantly burning and flickering and the gay and the elite are flushed with the giddy dance, then you behold a hall-scene, beautiful and fair."

Other hotels of splendor and brilliance rose nearby, but none of them matched in grandeur or immensity the Mount Vernon, quite likely the most amazing resort hotel venture undertaken along the New Jersey Shore at any time.

Consider that the largest resort hotel in the world today—the Chalfonte-Haddon Hall in Atlantic City—has room for 1,800 guests at absolute peak capacity. Then visualize the Mount Vernon, whose walls began to rise in 1852. Plans called for a front section and two tremendous wings, with total accommodations for 2,100 guests, with a bath in every room (in a day when most everyone, especially doctors, warned bathing might be unhealthy).

Alas, the Mount Vernon never reached completion. The front portion and one wing were finished and the second wing almost completed when an off-season fire in 1857 left only a pile of ashes. Even in its uncompleted state the Mount Vernon won acclaim as the largest hotel in the world at the time.

FIRE hung over the old wooden hotels as an always-near threat, but other things—erosion and fickle public enthusiasms, in particular—made the life of a hotel entrepreneur no perpetual thing of joy.

Pounding seas pulled the land out from under many a hotel—in Cape May, in Ocean City, at Barnegat Light and at Sea Bright, to mention a few spots. Nowhere, however, did hotels suffer in the manner of those ranged along the Long Branch bluff. Several times hotel men at The Branch moved their establishments back or let them wash away—and either way was expensive.

Back in 1880 Long Branch's hotels probably matched or exceeded those of any resort, in New Jersey or anywhere else. Each of the hotels sought to be distinctive. The Continental, calling itself in the 1880s "the Largest Hotel in the United States," commanded 700 feet of ocean frontage; the Stetson, renamed the West End in 1872, attracted the elite; Iauch's Hotel became the magnet for distinguished foreigners, diplomats and



Atlantic City's Chalfonte-Haddon Hall, world's largest resort hotel, has direct access to beach.

fashionable adventurers. Others found enjoyment at Howland's, the Mansion House, the Metropolitan, the Atlantic, the Hollywood or a score of other noted places.

Long Branch's hotels achieved a peculiar architectural distinction. As the correspondent for the New York Daily Tribune explained in 1868, the hotels were "not high but very long. . . . In the city a guest is shown 'up' to his quarters; in Long Branch he is shown 'out' to his quarters."

FASHION shifted its attention elsewhere and Long Branch hotel fortunes ebbed. Long Branch's loss meant gain elsewhere—say Asbury Park or Spring Lake or Sea Girt.

Asbury Park reached the peak of its hotel glory in the years between 1890 and 1930; most observers agree the city does not have the hotel prominence it enjoyed from 1910 to 1920—and is not likely to regain it. Back in 1889, to illustrate, Asbury Park had 200 hotels and boarding houses and many of the hotels remained open all winter. Today, rare is the Asbury Park's hotel open during the winter—and few new hotels have been built in the past 40 years.

Only one hotel in Asbury Park, or anywhere along the shore north of Atlantic City, rivals the rooming towers of Atlantic City. That is the Berkeley-Carteret, built in the mid-1920s and now the only major year-around hotel on the North Shore. Asbury Park hoped in the 1920s that the Berkeley-Carteret would spark other hotel syndicates into action but the depression killed that hope.

Most of Asbury Park's hotel world puts up the shutters and silently steals away after Labor Day, or by Oct. 1 at

the latest. Large hotels—such as the Monterey, next-door neighbor of the Berkeley-Carteret—remain closed until June, despite excellent locations overlooking the boardwalk and the Atlantic Ocean.

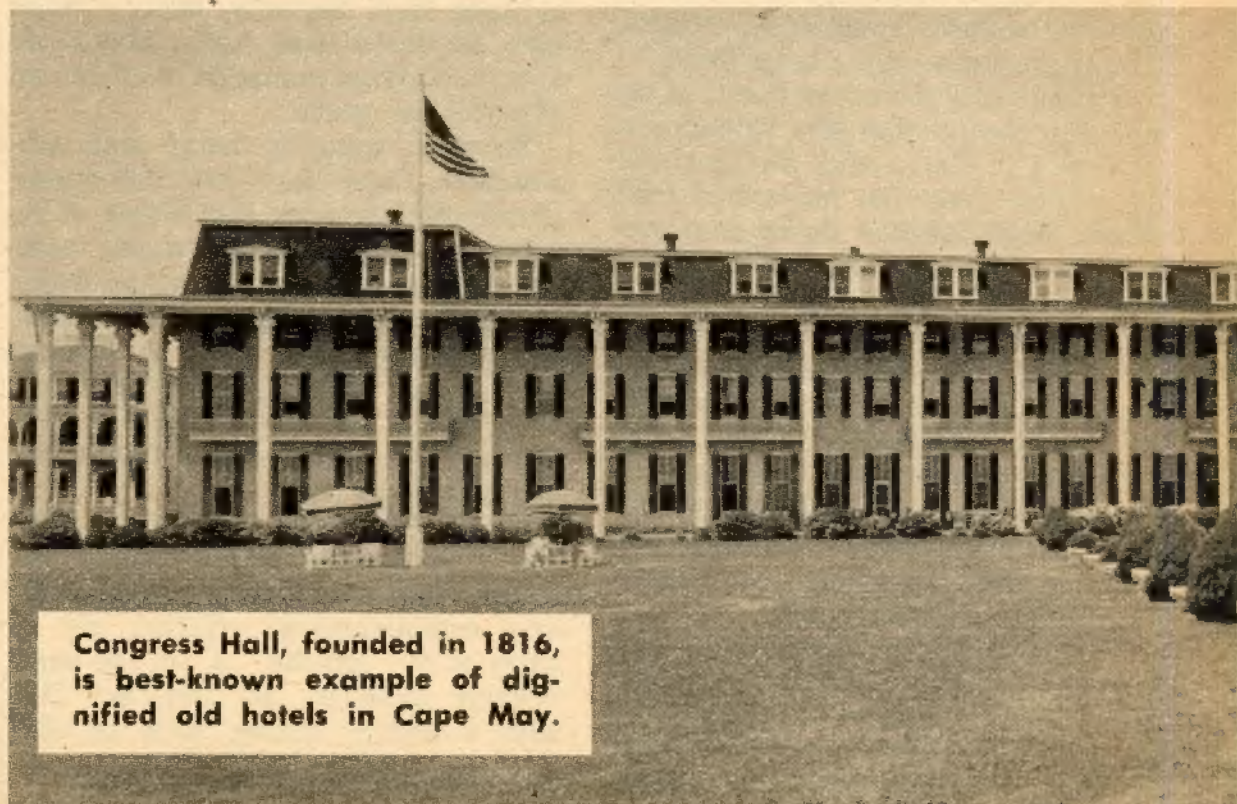
THAT seasonal emphasis touches virtually all New Jersey Shore hotels. Only the Flanders stays open year-around out of Ocean City's numerous hotels. Hotels at Wildwood, Cape May, Beach Haven and other spots are in the main closed from October to May. Up and down the coast it's a somewhat startling—even eerie—sight in a winter twilight—to see the tremendous hotels completely lifeless and completely dependent for existence on a crowd returning in the upcoming summer.

Spring Lake's hotels offer a good

illustration. In summer such fine hotels as the Monmouth, the Essex and Sussex, the Warren, the Breaker, the Shoreham and the Allaire are busy and humming with social activity; throughout the winter they are as lifeless as closed Army barracks at Camp Kilmer.

Much of the traditional summertime aura of by-gone days lingers about the Spring Lake hotels. Veteran hotel men declare that the average stop in Spring Lake hotels is probably the longest along the New Jersey coast—somewhere in the neighborhood of the old-time three weeks or longer.

Shore seasons plague hotel men almost more than anything else. Their big establishments remain empty more than 80 per cent of the time (most hotel keepers would settle for



Congress Hall, founded in 1816, is best-known example of dignified old hotels in Cape May.



Shape of things to come at "Queen of Resorts." These motels are springing up all along the shore.

50 consecutive good days in the summer). Labor is increasingly difficult to recruit on a part-time basis. The average guest no longer takes one hotel above others as a matter of course.

THE recourse for hotel men is to build up their seasons wherever they can—through getting people to come earlier and stay later, through winter programs, through stretching out the average stay per guest, through encouraging the American Plan or some reasonable facsimile. They must seek guests for the slack midweek periods which come even in summer; heavy weekends followed by empty rooms Tuesday through Thursday cause headaches.

Atlantic City's hotel keepers, particularly those on or near the "Walk,

won success in two ways—by keeping their rooms heated and open the year around and by encouraging large conventions to come to their city. Starting when the first hotel (the Brighton) stayed open all winter seeking to recoup losses suffered in the poor summer season of 1876, Atlantic City's hotels have seen the wisdom of a year-around program.

Conventions are the key, of course. A mid-February convention, such as that of the National Assn. of School Administrators, can bring 15,000 or 20,000 guests to town. Hotels compete for parts of this city-wide convention business—and at other times sponsor special meetings and conventions on their own. Conventions are big business to Atlantic City and hotels and city alike know it very well.

Singling out one hotel for attention

could be like waving a red flag before an arena full of jealous bulls. Nevertheless, justification can be made for so singling out the Chalfonte-Haddon Hall in Atlantic City.

FOR one thing, the Hall's management says flatly that it is the largest resort hotel in the world, with 1,000 rooms in the combined facilities of the enterprise. Certainly nothing matches the size of Chalfonte-Haddon Hall along the New Jersey shore. Nothing yet raised in Miami Beach approaches it in the number of rooms.

Then, too, the Chalfonte-Haddon Hall typifies the family management once a vital part of the Atlantic City scene. Most of the city's original hotels were built by Quakers from Philadelphia or its immediate environs. Today ownership is dispersed; few of the Boardwalk hotels are in original hands.

However, the Leeds and the Lippincotts still run the Chalfonte-Haddon Hall. A pair of young Burlington County Quakers, Henry Leeds and J. Haines Lippincott established this institution on an idea, a prayer and a mother who could cook.

FIRST, young Leeds and Lippincott bought Haddon Hall (established 1868) in 1890 and 10 years later they added the Chalfonte (founded 1869). Both of these frame boarding houses had been built inland, but when the young men from Burlington County bought them the two houses were on either side of North Carolina Ave. near the Boardwalk.

Henry's mother, with knowledge gained by cooking for delicate Sea Girt tastes, came down to run "the back of the house" for the boys. The

enterprise prospered: in 1904 the Chalfonte became a 10-story brick building, capable of housing nearly 600; during the 1920s two 11-story brick wings became the new Haddon Hall, with rooms for 1,200 guests.

Today the hyphenated Chalfonte-Haddon Hall is a place where fourth and fifth generations of families return every year. If statistics mean anything, read these from the acknowledged largest resort hotel in the world:

A total of 14,500 meals are served daily, for which 215,000 pieces of tableware are used. Each year 120,000 guests register and they drink 43,000 pounds of coffee, eat a million eggs a year and anywhere from 4,000 to 7,000 pound of fish each week. More than 700 employes work in the hotel the year around and in summer 1,200 employes staff the hotel—often one employe for each guest.

Chalfonte-Haddon Hall is an institution of note, and it is never likely to be duplicated in Atlantic City or elsewhere between Long Branch and Cape May. The future of guest housing seems to be in motels—or, as hotel men say, "motor hotels."

The term "motor hotel" is not without merit. Gone is the day of the poorly built "tourist cabin" with bathroom a short walk away under the stars. Construction is not cheap, and, in some cases, neither are the rates. Many a resort motel now comes complete with parking lot, TV set, swimming pool, lobby and, in a few cases, bellboys and tipping (the very things motels supposedly made unnecessary).

SHORE motels often are luxurious and quite large. One motel now on the drawing board in Atlantic City calls for 150 rooms. Ten Atlantic City motels built in 1956 cost nearly two million dollars. Incidentally, many hotel owners in Atlantic City see the motel footprints on the beach; several hotel owners now own or control motels in the city hotels made famous.

The future is catching up with the past in Atlantic City. During recent years a steady surge of motel building has been preceded by a period devoted to razing ancient "hotels." As one knowledgeable Atlantic City official put it: "This fall the building is torn down to save taxes, next summer it will be a parking lot and the following spring a motel will start." That's the cycle.

All the while the automobile keeps confounding hotel men. Automobiles bring in more customers; they also take them home in a hurry—or take them to California or Maine or New Orleans. Once a family packed its bags and stayed all summer at the shore (or else stayed home to rest up for a 72-hour work week).

Now everybody gets a vacation—and usually drives as far away as possible. Except there comes that unbearably hot weekend in summer and shore roads are clogged. Then comes the question: "Why don't they build more hotels or motels or something?" Ah, to be a hotelman . . .

